Towards a Scholarship of Practice for University Leadership in Southern Africa: The Two-Way Practitioner-Researcher Loop

Dawn Lyken-Segosebe[1] & John M. Braxton[2]

[1] Centre for Business Management, Entrepreneurship, and General Education, Botswana International University of Science and Technology, Palapye, Botswana.

[2] Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations (LPO), Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA.

Correspondence: Dawn Lyken-Segosebe, Centre for Business Management, Entrepreneurship, and General Education, Botswana International University of Science and Technology, Private Bag 16, Palapye, Botswana. E-mail: segosebed@biust.ac.bw

Received: September 2, 2020 Accepted: September 28, 2020 Online Published: September 30, 2020

doi:10.5430/ijhe.v10n1p93 URL: https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v10n1p93

Abstract

Vice chancellors of public universities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region face a myriad of challenges that require research- and data-driven decision-making. This paper presents a decision-making model for college and university leadership - The Two-Way Practitioner-Researcher Loop. This scholarship of practice has the twin goals of developing a knowledge base for college and university leadership and improving leadership practice in the university. The scholarship of practice comprises two "loops". In the practitioner-to-researcher loop, vice chancellors develop practitioner-defined research agenda to be researched internally by Departments of Institutional Research and externally by members of Higher Education research communities. In the researcher-to-practitioner loop, research findings are communicated back to vice chancellors for immediate application to institutional planning, policy formulation, and decision making. This scholarship of practice develops a knowledge base comprised of both "knowledge for practice" and "knowledge in practice" at the level of university leadership. To build capacity for vice chancellors to craft research agenda and questions emanating from their "knowledge in practice", we identify internal mechanisms and external associations, training programmes and other forums that provide leadership development and support for these university executives.

Keywords: scholarship of practice, university leadership, university presidency, leadership effectiveness, institutional research

1. Introduction

> The twenty-first century is rapidly forcing, not just encouraging, a different skill-set crucial for effective presidents of colleges/universities. The reduced time in which to make decisions and respond to crisis has spurred the need for expertise in areas many presidents did not anticipate. … As the national and global environment in which institutions of higher education operate has become volatile and unpredictable, presidents adept at managing rapid, radical changes and challenges are a necessity. (Lake, 2006, p. 112)

Principal academic and administrative officers of college and universities face a myriad of global and institutional challenges that require research- and data-driven decision-making. At the global level, leaders of public Higher Education institutions within the developing world continue to wrestle with persisting two-decades-old challenges indicated in the World Bank's (2000) Task Force Report, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*. Practical solutions are sought for problems related to quality (e.g., faculty quality, underdeveloped curriculum, and teacher-centred teaching approaches); problems faced by students (e.g., inequalities of access and outcomes, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate library and laboratory facilities, academically underprepared students at entry, limited access to remedial programmes, low enrollment rates, high graduate unemployment, and the need to promote an entrepreneurial culture among students); and problems related to limited resources and autonomy (e.g., high dependence on central government for financial resources, reduced and poorly coordinated capital and operating budgets, deteriorating buildings, scientific equipment in need of parts and supplies, and limited research funding for elite scholars and scientists) (World Bank, 2000).

At the institutional level, the leadership of individual colleges and universities may share several of the issues that challenge today's presidents of US colleges and universities. Presidents require feasible strategies to deal with cost containment, providing appropriate institutional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, being entrepreneurial to generate revenue, and adapting to changes demanded by the emerging knowledge economy, globalization, an evolving marketplace characterized by new needs (e.g., lifelong learning), new providers and competitors (e.g., for-profit universities), new paradigms (e.g., competency-based educational paradigms), and the need for technology across all aspects of the university landscape (e.g., for online learning and wireless connectivity to facilitate social distancing by students and staff) (Duderstadt, 2007; McFaddin, 2015; Morris, 2017; Soares et al., 2018). These adjustments arise at a time when US presidents report technology planning as the greatest deficiency in terms of their preparation for their university roles (Hartley & Godin, 2009).

Still at the institutional level, these principal officers require data and analyses on potential students, student enrollment, retention and persistence strategies, academic programmes, student services and facilities that promote student success, the academic and nonacademic experiences and career outcomes of students (e.g., student learning, degree completion and job placement), returns on government and institutional investment, among other management issues (Freeman & Kochan, 2012; Gagliardi & Turk, 2017). Given that university leadership "do not exercise their institutional leadership in a societal vacuum", they also require up-to-date information about the institution's immediate external environment (e.g., the country's political, economic, and socio-cultural environment) and world affairs that impact the institution's ability to effect and achieve its mission (Lake, 2006, p. 112).

College and university leadership require robust research mechanisms that directly address these challenges and day-to-day concerns. Research scholarship produced by individuals studying these issues often provide research findings useful to university leadership. However, a key implicit goal of such research is to contribute to the literature and knowledge bases of the research scholars' own fields, rather than to the university's needs. There is therefore a data and research gap in the provisions for institutional leadership. This initial study sought to determine whether such a gap exists at universities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The study's purpose was two-fold. It sought to investigate the extent to which executive leadership at SADC universities have access to institutional research structures and the requisite Higher Education knowledge to support their decision-making on critical institutional issues. The study also sought to propose a decision-making model – a scholarship of practice - for college and university leadership that closes any perceived Higher Education knowledge gap.

A scholarship of practice would be essential for vice chancellors at universities in the SADC region. Colleges and universities around the world differ as to the title used to denote the institution's principal academic and administrative officer or chief executive officer. Whereas colleges and universities in the USA and Canada use "President," the title "Vice Chancellor" tends to denote the principal academic and administrative officer at the over-100 public universities within the 15 countries comprising the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region - Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Kotecha, Wilson-Strydom, & Fongwa, 2012; Universities South Africa, 2020).

While scholarly work that examine the administrative experiences of the North American university president is relatively limited (e.g., Bensimon, 1989, 1990; Birnbaum, 2002; Fleming, 2012; Gearin, 2017; Glassner & Schapiro, 2013; Hart, 2018; McDaniel, 2002; Michael et al., 2001; Monks, 2012; Neumann & Bensimon, 1990; Patrick & Caruthers, 1980; Perrakis et al., 2010; Spendlove, 2007; Tunheim & McLean, 2006, 2014), research on the experiences and decision-making approaches of the vice chancellorship in the SADC region is virtually non-existent. The state of research on university leadership within the SADC region fits Kezar's (2000, p. x) comment that researchers are "less likely to examine the key challenges that confront administration; this proves disappointing for educators who need information to address daily crisis". Little is known about how these principal officers approach Higher Education decision-making, their backgrounds, and whether and how they draw on institutional and external research findings to address day-to-day institutional issues and challenges. In order to provide the basis for a scholarship of practice, three research questions drove the exploratory first part of this study:

1. To what extent do vice chancellors at SADC universities possess a terminal degree in education?
2. To what extent do the organizational structures of SADC universities include a department or directorate of institutional research?

3. To what extent do SADC universities offer Master's and PhD programmes that specialize in the study of college and university administration and Higher Education issues?

This study is significant as it breaks new ground with regards to studies that specifically examine the vice chancellorship within the SADC region. It contributes to the body of knowledge on institutional research structures important for decision-making on Higher Education issues within universities in the region. The study also informs on support mechanisms that can assist newly-appointed and even sitting vice chancellors in the SADC region to acquire the insight and vocabulary needed to craft research agenda that will ultimately improve the effectiveness of their decisions.

2. Conceptual Framework

The study derived its conceptual framework from Braxton's (2005) notion of the scholarship of practice for administrative work in Higher Education, and Braxton and Hossler's (2019) Two-Way Practitioner-Researcher Loop for Enrollment Management.

A scholarship of practice bridges "the gap between the theories developed and research findings obtained by academicians, and the questions asked and approaches adopted by practitioners in their daily work" (Lyken-Segosebe, 2017, p. 21). It couples knowledge generation and knowledge use "into a single enterprise" (Kielhofner, 2005). Braxton (2005) outlined a scholarship of practice for administrative work in Higher Education institutions to guide the practice of college and university administrators. The development of a knowledge base for administrative work in Higher Education institutions and the improvement of administrative practice in these institutions constituted the two primary goals of this scholarship of practice. The improvement of administrative practice also involved the use of findings of empirical research to develop institutional policy and practice by practitioners in individual colleges and universities (Braxton, 2017).

The development of a knowledge base for enrollment management in Higher Education institutions and the improvement of the practice of enrollment management formed the basis of Braxton and Hossler's (2019) Two-Way Practitioner-Researcher Loop for Enrollment Management. Braxton and Hossler recognized a pathway leading from enrollment managers to a community of researchers. This pathway involved the sharing of topics for research needed by enrollment managers to conduct their day-to-day work. This practitioner-defined agenda is shared in the practitioner-to-researcher loop. The two researchers also recognized a pathway of research findings leading from the research community back to enrollment managers. Accordingly, this dissemination pathway constituted the researcher-to-practitioner loop.

The scholarship of practice proposed in this study for college and university leadership will have two primary goals:

1. The development of a knowledge base for college and university leadership in the university, and
2. The improvement of college and university leadership practice in the university (Braxton, 2005).

With regards to the development of the knowledge base, it is proposed that college and university leaders will develop "practitioner-defined research agenda," that is, delineate the topics and issues confronting them in their day-to-day practice of running the university that require an empirical treatment. With regards to the improvement of their practice, these leaders will work towards using the findings of available and current empirical research studies to guide their professional practice and to develop university policy and practice (Braxton, 2017). Underpinning this scholarship of practice, therefore, is the development of "knowledge for practice" as well as the development of "knowledge in practice" (Kielhofner, 2005; Usher & Bryant, 1987).

Engagement in the scholarship of practice by these principal officers of college and universities will prevent them from commonsensical "shooting from the hip" or "trial-and-error" forms of professional action; action that greatly requires grounding in empirical research. In this way, these principal officers who use research findings to develop institutional policy and practice, function as stewards for the field of college and university leadership as they safeguard the welfare of the field in general and the welfare of their institutions in particular (Braxton & Ream, 2017).

3. Method

The population of inference for this study comprised public universities within the 15 SADC countries - Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. An online search revealed 109 public universities. Thirty-three universities were removed from consideration including those with non-English language

websites (e.g., in Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar and Mozambique), no websites or suspended websites. This yielded a set of 76 public universities.

The methodological approach utilized was interpretative content analysis of the websites of the 76 universities. Content analysis is an exploratory approach that involves making inferences through the "systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 3). It is a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). University websites were assessed for evidence of vice chancellors' academic backgrounds (i.e. the fields of their terminal degrees), departments or directorates of institutional research, and Master's and PhD programmes in Higher Education. Data from the content analysis were analysed using a descriptive analytical strategy and Stata software.

4. Findings

Findings are organized according to the three research questions that guided this study.

Research Question One: To what extent do vice chancellors at SADC universities possess a terminal degree in education?

Vice chancellors within the SADC region bring a wealth of specialist expertise to their decision-making. They derive from a diversity of academic backgrounds. Table 1 indicates the fields of the terminal degrees of these principal officers. A significant number of the 76 vice chancellors at public universities were recruited from Science-related fields. Twelve of these principal officers derive from the field of Education.

Table 1. PhD Fields of Vice Chancellors at Public Universities in SADC Countries

SADC Country	Number of Public Universities	PhD fields of Vice Chancellors' Qualifications
Botswana	4	Animal Science, Soil Science, Chemical Pathology, Education
Lesotho	1	Commercial Law
Malawi	4	Agriculture, Chemistry (x2), Nursing
Mauritius	4	Education, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics
Namibia	2	Innovation Diffusion and Development, Public Administration
Seychelles	1	Education
South Africa	26	Mathematics (x3), Media Studies, Political Science, Medicine, Management, Chemistry (x2), Physics (x2), Engineering (x2), International Political Economy, Psychology (x3), Sociology(x3), Zoology (x2), Education (x3), Law
Swaziland	1	Chemistry
Tanzania	13	Education (x2), Material Science, Environmental Technology, Medicine, Forest Management, Microbiology (x2), Development Studies, Oceanography, Systems Engineering, Hydrology, Library and Information Science
Zambia	9	Education (x2), Biology, Chemistry, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Mathematics, Public Management, Business Leadership
Zimbabwe	11	Education (x2), Agriculture, Soil Science, Anthropology, Electronic Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Metallurgy, Microbiology and Biotechnology, Industrial Engineering, Biochemical Immunology
Total	**76**	

Research Question Two: To what extent do the organizational structures of SADC universities include a department or directorate of institutional research?

To assist their day-to-day practice of running the university, US college and university presidents typically rely on Departments of Institutional Research to support their decision-making, planning, and actions by providing

high-quality and relevant data, information, and analysis, including predictive analytics. However, no studies exist that examine how their counterparts within the SADC region make decisions on Higher Education issues, or the extent to which they rely on Higher Education research findings and the research outputs of Departments of Institutional Research to inform their decision-making. Table 2 indicates that of the 76 universities, only 40 universities (53 percent) list a Department of Institutional Research, Planning or Intelligence as part of their administrative structures.

Table 2. Departments of Institutional Research, Planning or Intelligence on University Websites

SADC Country	Number of Public Universities	Number of Universities indicating a Department of Institutional Research, Planning or Intelligence
Botswana	4	3
Lesotho	1	1
Malawi	4	0
Mauritius	4	1
Namibia	2	2
Seychelles	1	0
South Africa	26	17
Swaziland	1	1
Tanzania	13	13
Zambia	9	1
Zimbabwe	11	1
Total	**76**	**40**

Such a department tends to be listed on the websites of public universities across Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, and Tanzania, but less so on institutional websites within Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. For some universities, particularly South African universities, websites explicitly state the functions of this department as data management and/or institutional research. In other universities, the department's focus is primarily planning - the function of the department is stated as physical (e.g., facilities) planning, budgeting and/or strategic planning utilising the Balanced Scorecard and other frameworks. Institutions vary regarding the breadth of information they provide on their websites. However, the multi-varied missions attached to the various Departments of Institutional Research, Planning or Intelligence makes it unclear as to whether the potential of institutional research and data analytics for decision-making are being fully embraced by university leaders.

Research Question Three: To what extent do SADC universities offer Master's and PhD programmes that specialize in the study of college and university administration and Higher Education issues?

Table 3 indicates the availability of programmes of study in the Higher Education field within the SADC region. Content analysis of university websites revealed that the Study of Higher Education within the region tends to be conceptualized in terms of Teaching and Learning. We found that study programmes with the title of Higher Education focused primarily on pedagogy, curriculum development and other teacher preparation topics. This finding contrasts with the situation at US universities where the Study of Higher Education focuses on issues related to college and university administration – students, faculty members, university staff, university leadership, administration and governance, teaching and learning, college and university sub-populations, contextual issues, and related policy, legal, financial, economic, and international Higher Education issues. These study programmes prepare graduates for future roles in university administration including in student affairs, enrolment management and institutional research.

Our content analysis of university websites revealed that within the SADC region, the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa is the only institution that offers a Master of Education degree in Higher Education Student and Professional Services and PhD in Higher Education, that match the focus of US programmes in Higher Education. This finding suggested that staff within Departments of Institutional Research in the region may not necessarily be professionalized or specialists similar to their counterparts at US universities, that is, hired on the basis of a relevant qualification in Higher Education, such as a Master's degree in Higher Education.

Table 3. Postgraduate Degree Programmes in the Higher Education Field available in the SADC Region

SADC Country	University	Higher Education Qualification	
		Focus: Teaching and Learning	**Focus: College and University Administration**
Namibia	University of Namibia	• Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education	
South Africa	University of Cape Town	• Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education • MEd in Higher Education Studies	
	University of Fort Hare	• Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education and Training	
	University of the Free State	• Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education • MEd in Higher Education • PhD Higher Education Studies	
	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal	• Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education • MEd in Higher Education Teaching and Learning • PhD in Higher Education	• MEd in Higher Education Student and Professional Services • PhD in Higher Education
	University of Stellenbosch	• Postgraduate Diploma in Education specialising in Higher Education Studies • MPhil Higher Education	
Zimbabwe	Bindura University of Science Education	• Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Education	
	Great Zimbabwe University	• Postgraduate Diploma in Higher and Tertiary Education	

Given that principal officers across the region generally derive from non-Higher Education backgrounds and institutional research or planning departments may not all have a similar focus, we propose a scholarship of practice for college and university leadership within the SADC region that will seek to routinely promote the formation of a cumulative body of leadership knowledge that is empirically grounded, and which can be readily applied by vice chancellors to the planning, provision, and evaluation of university business. We propose an inductive approach to knowledge generation whereby vice chancellors initiate and rely on the work of Higher Education research communities to generate research findings useful to their practice. Based on practical problems experienced in their office, vice chancellors will themselves suggest studies or provide parameters for studies necessary to better inform their development of institutional policy and practice. Consequently, the domain of effective college and university leadership of universities requires a two-way loop: a practitioner-to-researcher loop and a researcher-to-practitioner loop. The modalities of the pathways from vice chancellors to researchers and back to vice chancellors are outlined below, together with a discussion of supportive structures for the implementation of this Two-Way Practitioner-Researcher Loop for College and University Leadership.

5. The Two-Way Practitioner-Researcher Loop for College and University Leadership

5.1 The Practitioner-to-Researcher Loop

The key step in forging the practitioner-to-researcher loop entails the development by vice chancellors of an agenda for research. Without the development of a practitioner-defined research agenda this loop will fail to develop. Soares, Gagliardi, Wilkinson, & Hughes (2018) describe innovative leaders of a college or university as those that gather evidence for effective decision-making. According to these researchers,

> Innovative leaders dissuade decision making that is anecdotal in nature. Instead, they promote decision making based on evidence, which can increase the tolerance for strategic risk and small failures. They are willing to make and advance less traditional decisions if they are supported by accurate evidence and compelling stories. Cultivating positive attitudes toward the collection and use of data enables a culture on campus that elevates informed decision making at all levels across the campus. (Soares, Gagliardi, Wilkinson, & Hughes, 2018, p. 6)

In the practitioner-to-researcher loop, vice chancellors will develop a "practitioner-defined research agenda", that is, they will delineate the topics and issues confronting them in their day-to-day practice of running the university that require an empirical treatment. Research problems and questions will arise from their leadership practice as they manage institutional finances, supervise enrolment management and academic affairs, develop strategic plans, administer the personnel system, oversee the maintenance of facilities, oversee fundraising activities and institutional advancement, consult and cooperate with university governance, and represent the university in public affairs.

In this practitioner-to-researcher loop, two research communities will undertake the research agenda delineated by regional vice chancellors. The first research community is the most direct. It is to be expected that vice chancellors' questions will be answered within their own universities by fully-resourced Departments of Institutional Research. Institutional research is "research conducted within an institution of higher education in order to provide information which supports institutional planning, policy formulation, and decision making" (Saupe, 1990, p. 6). Content analysis of the websites of public universities within the SADC region revealed just over a half of these universities indicate the presence of Institutional Research departments on their organizational structures. Universities without such a department will not have this research community available to them.

Beyond responding to the research agenda of their principal officers, such departments will routinely generate "organizational intelligence" (Fincher, 1985, p. 34), that is, data and analyses related to student applications, admissions, enrolment and persistence, degrees conferred/graduation rates, academic offerings and policies, student life participation, the cost of attendance (e.g. tuition rates, room and board, meals, books and supplies, lab fees, student activities and recreation fees), financial aid (e.g. aid, scholarships, grants, etc.), instructional faculty, teaching loads, and class sizes, administrative staff, post-graduation outcomes and earnings, and labour market projections by occupations. Such data are typically displayed through interactive dashboards on university websites.

Vice chancellors may request Departments of Institutional Research to utilize predictive analytics to develop a range of strategies such as resource strategies related to budgeting, and on alternative business models that yield new revenue streams and better cost structures (Gagliardi & Turk, 2017). Predictive analytics may be requested to improve student outcomes, for example, by using grade-prediction models to place students in courses that offer them the highest likelihood of success, and to increase graduation rates using decisions based on the analysis of several years of student financial data and thousands of student records. It is expected that the department will also generate key predictions to enhance teaching, learning, and advising (Gagliardi & Turk, 2017).

Furthermore, to generate additional robust data for vice chancellors' and other internal data-driven decision-making and programmatic interventions, the department will routinely develop, implement and analyse annual semester-based internal surveys on students' experience, satisfaction, mattering, quality of life, financial wellness and engagement, and on faculty and staff well-being, climate and satisfaction. The COVID-19 Student Experience Survey, Graduating Student Exit Survey, and Alumni Tracer Survey lie within the remit of the department. Such a department will also facilitate a range of on-request surveys for the government, and the annual world university ranking exercises conducted by the Times Higher Education (THE) magazine, Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Ltd, Shanghai Ranking Consultancy and other organizations.

In order to be adequately equipped to address vice chancellors' research questions, we recommend Departments of Institutional Research be full-resourced in terms of access to statistical software typically used to extract and manipulate datasets (e.g., SPSS, Stata, R, SAS), and software affording predictive and visual analytics (e.g., Tableau, Qlikview, Power BI). Our content analysis of university websites indicated that the Study of Higher Education in the

SADC region is conceptualized in terms of Teaching and Learning and that the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa is the only institution that offers a Master of Education degree in Higher Education Student and Professional Services and PhD in Higher Education resembling the focus of US programmes that prepare future university administration staff for roles in student affairs, enrolment management, institutional research, etc. To adequately prepare the department's staff members to address vice chancellors' research agenda, we therefore recommend that these staff members be trained on the definitions and measurement of Higher Education indicators, the rationales for the generation of the various indicators, relevant Higher Education theories and topical issues related to university students, faculty members, governance, etc.

In this practitioner-to-researcher loop, members of the Higher Education research community will constitute the second research community to fulfil the practitioner-defined research agenda of regional vice chancellors. The development of a knowledge base for college and university leadership requires the sustained efforts of this second research community. These scholars will be external to the institution and comprise individuals who study topics or issues pertinent to the Higher Education field on the African continent in general and in Southern Africa in particular. The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) represent two groups of such scholars.

The Higher Education research community also includes scholars who study Higher Education from international perspectives and occasionally centre their attention on Higher Education issues related to Africa and Southern Africa. Additional members of this research community will be doctoral students enrolled in Higher Education programmes who are engaged in dissertation research. Funding for the pursuit of this practitioner-defined research agenda may derive from the originating university (e.g., the vice chancellor's vote), or through grants from scholars' individual universities, the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), the Association of African Universities (AAU), the International Network for Higher Education in Africa sponsored by the University of Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa, the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP), CODESRIA and other international funding sources.

Members of the Higher Education research community may access vice chancellors' research agenda in various ways such as through survey instruments that request vice chancellors to suggest critical topics or issues that they think would benefit from research or through the arrangement of focus group meetings (e.g. at regional conferences) whereby critical research agenda is extracted from a group of selected vice chancellors.

5.2 The Researcher-to-Practitioner Loop

The Two-Way Practitioner-Researcher Loop for College and University Leadership is completed by the researcher-to-practitioner loop. This loop involves the communication of research findings to vice chancellors. Since vice chancellors in the SADC region may view the topics and issues of their own practitioner-defined research agenda as the most pressing, the usefulness of the findings of such studies and their accompanying recommendations depend on their timely communication to vice chancellors (Love & Braxton, 2020). Love and Braxton (2020) state the word "rapid" best characterizes the timeliness of communication. We recommend that findings be arranged with an emphasis on the most important findings to the topics derived from the practitioner-defined research agenda (Love & Braxton, 2020). Recommendations for institutional policy and practice should consist only of realistic recommendations (Morphew & Braxton, 2017). Furthermore, researchers should state a priority for the implementation of their recommendations and provide rationales for the assignment of these priorities (Morphew & Braxton, 2017). Morphew and Braxton (2017) admonish researchers to avoid recommendations involving large investments of resources, long timelines or that require changes in institutional mission, or the type of students served.

Members of the Higher Education research community who conduct research on topics or issues in the practitioner-defined research agenda could place their research findings in multiple outlets (Braxton & Hossler, 2019). While required communication forms will be dictated by individual vice chancellors, technical reports may provide an appropriate form to disseminate such findings. Other possible outlets for the rapid dissemination of findings and recommendations include blogs, podcasts, and webinars (Love & Braxton, 2020). The Association of African Universities (AAU) hosts such webinars. For blogs and podcasts, we recommend that associations such as the AAU, the International Network for Higher Education in Africa and SARUA expand their member services to include the postings of blogs and the sponsorship of podcasts. Summaries of findings and their associated recommendations for policy and practice may also be disseminated via the Newsletter of the AAU, African Higher

Education News of the International Network for Higher Education in Africa, SARUA's News, and CODESRIA's Bulletins and Working Papers.

It is expected that members of the Higher Education research community and doctoral students will also utilize traditional channels of communication to publish their findings. Such publication mediums as articles in refereed academic and professional sources, books, books chapters and monographs form the "traditional scholarship assessment template" (Braxton & Del Favero, 2002). Some members of this community may have academic appointments at universities that emphasize publications in this traditional template for faculty personnel decisions such as annual salary increases, reappointment, tenure and promotion. Relevant regional academic journals may include the International Journal of African Higher Education, Journal of Higher Education in Africa, the South African Journal of Higher Education, and the South African Journal of Education.

Relevant international journals include the Journal of Research on the College President, the Presidency, Journal of Higher Education, Review of Higher Education, Research in Higher Education, Higher Education, Studies in Higher Education, Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, Higher Education Research and Development, International Journal of Higher Education, Management in Education, International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, Higher Education Policy, Innovative Higher Education, Higher Education Quarterly, Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, and Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education.

In addition to these possibilities, specific academic and professional journals routinely accessed by vice chancellors may emerge during preliminary discussions of the research agenda. Researchers may post information about their publications in the African Higher Education Resource Database sponsored by the International Network for Higher Education in Africa., and SARUA's Leadership Dialogue Series, Communities of Practice Initiative and Higher Education Reports.

6. Preparing SADC Vice Chancellors for the Practitioner-to-Researcher Loop

Ascending to the position of vice chancellor does not require the possession of a Master's, EdD or PhD in Higher Education Leadership or Higher Education Administration (HEA). However, after arrival in office these college and university leaders must quickly acquire critical skills and knowledge to handle Higher Education issues. According to Chandler (2006, p. 25), "leading the modern college or university is a complicated affair, requiring the organizational affairs of a field marshal, the fiscal acumen of a CPA, the diplomacy of a politician and the vision of a prophet." Lake (2006, p. 112) states that university leadership require "the capability, knowledge and sophisticated tools to assist them in meeting tomorrow's global educational challenges. Consequences of Higher Education institutions mismanagement can have dire and long lasting-effects." These comments reveal that, half a decade later, the vice chancellor's role at a SADC university remains within the parameters identified for the leadership of the US multiversity created after World War II and as described by Clark Kerr in his 1963 Godkin lectures:

> The university president in the United States is expected to be a friend of the students, a colleague of the faculty, a good fellow with the alumni, a sound administrator with the trustees, a good speaker with the public, an astute bargainer with the foundations and the federal agencies, a politician with the state legislature, a friend of industry, labor, and agriculture…(p. 22).

Several support mechanisms are available to assist newly-appointed SADC's vice chancellors to acquire the insight and vocabulary needed to craft research agenda for the attention of the various Higher Education research communities. Vice chancellors of universities in South Africa benefit from Universities South Africa's (USAf) "Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM)" programme that is provided through a strategic partnership with that country's Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). HELM offers vice chancellors and senior university management evidence-based "strategic insight into the specific challenges that exist within the South African higher education landscape", and "valuable perspectives on the contemporary leadership and management context, complexities and challenges facing universities" (Universities South Africa, 2020). Universities South Africa reports that the HELM programme produces pooled data and information on leadership/management capacity issues. This data and information potentially provide inputs for the researcher-to-practitioner loop. There is a plan to extend this capacity development programme to university leadership across the SADC region through the establishment in 2021 of the HELM Institute in partnership with regional partners such as the SARUA and CODESRIA (Universities South Africa, 2020).

At a continental level, the Association of African Universities (AAU) represents another source of support and development for regional university leaders. The Association offers the Leadership Development Training

Programme (LEDEV) to enhance the leadership skills of university leaders in the areas of university advancement and resource mobilization, strategic planning, quality assurance, promotion of university-industry linkages, and leadership and governance, among other critical areas. The AAU also provides two Workshops – the University Industry Linkages Workshop and University Advancement Workshop - for university leaders (Association of African Universities, n.d.).

Memberships of several international associations may be developmental for regional vice chancellors. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) provides professional development opportunities for member presidents and chancellors. Its Millennium Leadership Initiative (MLI) Institute prepares candidates for the positions of university president or chancellor through theoretical learning and practical, hands-on training. The AASCU's New Presidents Academy conference is tailored to the distinctive needs of presidents and chancellors who lead state colleges and universities. This conference offers mentorship, coaching and practical advice grounded in leadership research and complemented by the knowledge and experience of current and former AASCU presidents who serve as academy faculty (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, n.d.).

University leaders within SADC may also acquire mentorship and critical knowledge to deal with and develop Higher Education research agenda by participating in forums organized by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) such as its conference on transforming STEM Higher Education which, in part, examines institutional policies and practices that benefit STEM students and faculty members, and its annual meetings that examine current questions, issues, and potential solutions surrounding Higher Education such as those pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic (American Association of Colleges and Universities, n.d.). Furthermore, the American Council on Education's (ACE) Institute for New Presidents, the Advancing to the Presidency workshop, and annual meetings may afford regional vice chancellors with opportunities "to explore fresh perspectives for practical solutions on campus, network with top leaders across all higher education sectors, and bring data-driven insights back to campus" (American Council on Education, n.d.). These initiatives have the capacity to provide vice chancellors within the SADC region with a wealth of resources and guidance to effectively marshal their institutions, fine-tune their "knowledge in practice," and direct the practitioner-to-researcher loop and the generation of "knowledge for practice".

7. Conclusion

The development of a knowledge base for the leadership of universities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region requires a two-way loop of research exchange from practitioners to researchers and researchers to practitioners. Through this two-way loop, the potential for the development of such a knowledge base comprised of both "knowledge for practice" and "knowledge in practice" (Kielhofner, 2005; Usher & Bryant, 1987) exists. The development of such a knowledge base depends on the sustained and reoccurring efforts of both practitioners and researchers. The use of such a knowledge base by practitioners will assure the grounding of their decision-making in the findings of empirical research and prevent them from making "trial-and-error" decisions (Braxton & Ream, 2017).

Social, economic, political, and more recently public health factors are continually re-shaping the Higher Education landscape. Principal officers more adept at dealing with these issues will seek to ensure their administration's primary research community – the department/directorate of institutional research – is fully functional and effectively capacitated. The range of current challenges confronting universities in Southern Africa desperately demand empirically-based actions by their vice chancellors. Leveraging internal data resources for decision-making is a key hallmark of the successful vice chancellor.

It is envisaged that future research work will closely resemble that of the Higher Education research community in the practitioner-to-researcher loop. Future research will also seek to build a knowledge base on the vice chancellorship within the SADC region. Research studies will be undertaken that inform on the demographic characteristics of vice chancellors, their duties and responsibilities, how they make decisions on Higher Education issues, the extent to which they rely on Higher Education research findings and the research outputs of Departments of Institutional Research and external research communities to inform their decision-making, and how these principal officers view contemporary pressing issues facing Higher Education in the SADC region.

References

American Association of Colleges and Universities. (n.d.). *AAC&U Meetings and Events*. Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/events

American Association of State Colleges and Universities. (n.d.). *Leadership Development and Partnerships*. Retrieved from https://aascu.org/meetings/

American Council on Education. (n.d.). *ACE2021 – ACE'S 103rd Annual Meeting*. Retrieved from https://www.acenet.edu/Events/Pages/ACE2021.aspx

Association of African Universities. (n.d.). *The Association of African Universities*. Retrieved from https://www.aau.org/

Bensimon, E. M. (1989). The meaning of "Good Presidential Leadership": A frame analysis. *The Review of Higher Education, 12*(2), 107-123. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.1989.0024

Bensimon, E. M. (1990). Viewing the presidency: Perceptual congruence between presidents and leaders on their campuses. *The Leadership Quarterly, 1*(2), 71-90. https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(90)90007-5

Birnbaum, R. (2002). The president as storyteller: Restoring the narrative of higher education. *The Presidency, 5*(3), 32-39.

Braxton, J. M., & Ream, T. C. (2017). The scholarship of practice and stewardship of higher education. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *New Directions for Higher Education No. 178: Towards a Scholarship of Practice* (pp. 95-102). Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20237

Braxton, J. M. (2005). Reflections on a scholarship of practice. *The Review of Higher Education, 28*(2), 285-293.https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2004.0033

Braxton, J. M. (2017). Editor's notes. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *New Directions for Higher Education No. 178: Towards A Scholarship of Practice* (pp. 5-8). Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20229

Braxton, J. M., & Del Favero, M. (2002). Evaluating scholarship performance: Traditional and emergent assessment templates. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 114*, 19-32. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.43

Braxton, J. M., Doyle, W. R., Hartley III, H. V., Hirschy, A. S., Jones, W. A., & McLendon, M. K. (2014). *Rethinking college student retention*. John Wiley & Sons.

Braxton, J. M., & Hossler, D. (2019). Developing the two-way practitioner-researcher loop for enrollment management. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 7*(2), 7-12.

Chandler, K. (2006). *The American college president: A study of HBCU and non-HBCU college presidents.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Duderstadt, J. (2007). *Higher education in the 21st Century: Global imperatives, regional challenges, national responsibilities, and emerging opportunities*. Retrieved from http://milproj.ummu.umich.edu/pdfs/2008/Glion%20VI%20Globalization.pdf

Fincher, C. (1985). The art and science of institutional research. In M. Corcoran and M. W. Peterson (Eds.), *Institutional Research in Transition* (pp. 17-37). New Directions for Institutional Research, No. 46. Jossey Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.37019854604

Fleming, J. C. (2012). Toward a code of conduct for the presidency. *New Directions for Higher Education* (160), 5-18. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20032

Freeman, S., & Kochan, F. K. (2012). Academic pathways to university leadership: Presidents' descriptions of their doctoral education. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 7*, 93-124. https://doi.org/10.28945/1567

Gagliardi, J. S., & Turk, J. M. (2017). *The data-enabled executive: Using analytics for student success and sustainability*. American Council on Education.

Gearin, C. A. (2017). New higher education president integration: Change and resistance viewed through social power bases and a change model lens. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 39*(5), 559-574. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2017.1354768

Glassner, B., & Schapiro, M. (2013, February 11). College presidents: Bruised, battered, and loving it. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/college-presidents-bruised-battered-and-loving-it/

Hart, T. M. (2018). *University presidents' utilization of leadership frames: A qualitative study comparing self-perceptions of university presidents to perceptions of faculty and staff.* [Ed.D. Dissertation, Hardin-Simmons University]. ProQuest LLC. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/2050635885

Hartley, H. V., & Godin, E. E. (2009). *A study of career patterns of the presidents of independent colleges and universities*. Council of Independent Colleges.

Kerr, C. (2001). *The uses of the university* (5th ed). Harvard University Press.

Kezar, A. J. (2000). *ERIC trends on administration, finance, policy, governance, teaching and learning, students, faculty, and international higher education. Report summarizing the literature from 1999/2000*. Retrieved from http://www.eriche.org/trends/index.html

Kielhofner, G. A. (2005). Research concepts in clinical scholarship—Scholarship and practice: Bridging the divide. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 59*(2), 231-239. https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.59.2.231

Kotecha, P., Wilson-Strydom, M., & Fongwa, S. M. (Eds.). (2012). *A profile of higher education in southern Africa, Volume 2: National perspectives*. Southern African Regional Universities Association.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage Publications.

Lake, R. S. (2006). How college/university presidents around the world make decisions. *Research in Comparative and International Education, 1*(1), 109-119. https://doi.org/10.2304/rcie.2006.1.1.9

Love, P. G., & Braxton, J. M. (2020). Invigorating a scholarship of practice for the profession of student affairs. *American College Personnel Association, 17*(2). Retrieved from http://developments.myacpa.org/category/volume-17/2020-issue-2-winter/

Lyken-Segosebe, D. (2017). The scholarship of practice in applied disciplines. *New Directions for Higher Education, No. 178*. Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20231

McDaniel, E. A. (2002). Senior leadership in higher education: An outcomes approach. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 9(*2), 80-88. https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190200900207

McFaddin, D. T. (2015). *The 21st century university president: Building blocks for effective rural leadership.* [Doctoral thesis, Eastern Kentucky University]. Encompass Online Theses and Dissertations. Retrieved from https://encompass.eku.edu/etd/399

Michael, S. O., Schwartz, M., & Balraj, L. (2001). Indicators of presidential effectiveness: A study of trustees of higher education institutions. *International Journal of Educational Management, 15*(7), 332-346. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540110407938

Monks, J. (2012). Job turnover among university presidents in the United States of America. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 34*(2), 139-152. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2012.662739

Morphew, C. C., & Braxton, J. M. (2017). Trusses and gaps in the bridge from research to practice. In C. C. Morphew and J. M. Braxton (Eds). *The Challenge of Independent Colleges: Moving Research to Practice (pp.231-242).* The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Morris, A. (2017). Challenges and opportunities facing the community college president in the 21st century. *Journal of Research on the College President, 1*(1). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.uark.edu/jrcp/vol1/iss1/2

Neumann, A., & Bensimon, E. M. (1990). Constructing the presidency. *Journal of Higher Education, 61*(6), 678-701. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.1990.11775116

Patrick, C., & Caruthers, J. K. (1980). Management priorities of college presidents. *Research in Higher Education, 12*(3), 195-214. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00976092

Perrakis, A. I., Galloway, F. J., Hayes, K. K., & Robinson-Galdo, K. (2010). Presidential satisfaction in higher education: An empirical study of two- and four-year institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 33*(1), 57-66. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2011.537012

Saupe, J. L. (1990). *The Functions of Institutional Research (2nd ed.).* Association for Institutional Research.

Soares, L., Gagliardi, J. S., Wilkinson, P. J., & Hughes, S. L. (2018). *Innovative Leadership: Insights from the American College President Study 2017.* American Council on Education.

Spendlove, M. (2007). Competencies for effective leadership in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Management, 21*(5), 407-417. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540710760183

Tolliver, D. V., & Murray, J. W. (2017). Management skills for the contemporary college president: A critical review. *Journal of Research on the College President, 1*(1), 9-17. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.uark.edu/jrcp/vol1/iss1/3

Tunheim, K. A., & McLean, G. N. (2006, February). *Competency model for the role of president of religion-affiliated colleges.* Paper presented at the meeting of the Academy of Human Resource Development, Columbus, OH. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED492768.pdf

Tunheim, K. A., & McLean, G. N. (2014). Lessons learned from former college presidents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: A phenomenological study. *Christian Higher Education, 13*(3), 199-210. https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2014.904654

Universities South Africa. (2020). *Universities South Africa (USAf).* Retrieved from https://www.usaf.ac.za/

Usher, R., & Bryant, I. (1987). Re-examining the theory-practice relationship in continuing professional education. *Studies in Higher Education, 12*(2), 201-212. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075078712331378181

World Bank. (2000). *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise.* World Bank.